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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ES](#)
SUBJECT: FMLN ACTIVELY COURTING OPPOSITION DEPUTIES

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: PDC and PCN (small swing parties) Assembly Deputies told us June 16 they have been approached by the (left-wing) FMLN with monetary offers to switch parties and the FMLN is targeting (conservative) ARENA Deputies with inducements to form a new parliamentary grouping though not join the FMLN. The PCN Deputies said Funes' appointment of Manuel Melgar as Public Security Minister was especially disrespectful to the United States given his involvement in the 1985 Zona Rosa killings. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Emboffs met June 16 with Francis Zablah, first-term Christian Democrat (PDC) Deputy in the Legislative Assembly. Unprovoked, Zablah confirmed reports that he has been approached by the FMLN with large monetary offers to leave PDC and join the FMLN. (Note: The PDC has a split personality, with PDC President Rodolfo Parker leaning right against the party's left-of-center base. The PDC tends to vote with, but is not formally allied with, ARENA.) Zablah said the FMLN was making offers, not threats, including money, guaranteed future terms in the Assembly and other benefits. He said he understood some eight to ten ARENA deputies were being targeted by the FMLN. Zablah, an independently wealthy businessman, indicated he is not for sale. He also said he was frustrated with ARENA's behavior, calling out ARENA Deputy Roberto D'Aubuisson by name, for reflexively opposing any FMLN initiative, even sensible ideas. Zablah said he finds himself in the odd position of sometimes defending FMLN ideas with PDC, ARENA and the ARENA-allied National Conciliation Party (PCN), though he remains suspicious of the FMLN and is not interested in its entreaties.

¶3. (C) Polcouns met separately June 16 with PCN Deputies Jose Antonio Almendariz and Roberto Angulo. Almendariz said the FMLN had made him an offer to change parties. Initially, he said, the offer was over a million dollars then evolved to \$600,000 and a monthly stipend, committee positions, party positions, and other benefits. Almendariz, like Zablah, said he was not interested in joining the FMLN. Almendariz said the FMLN was targeting six ARENA deputies and two each from PDC and PCN. He judged the most danger lay with the ARENA deputies who, while not willing to join the FMLN, are so frustrated with the party they are considering forming a new group in the Assembly. These unnamed deputies are reportedly still smarting from the perceived abuses of the Saca administration but are not keen to follow the leadership of former President Alfredo Cristiani, new president of ARENA's Executive Board.

¶4. (C) Almendariz said it was clear from appointments of former combatants to the Ministries of Education (VP Salvador Sanchez Ceren), Governance (Humberto Centeno), and Public Security (Manuel Melgar) that President Funes is not fully in charge of the GOES. Angulo said the Melgar appointment, in particular, was evidence that the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS), now part of the FMLN, had never given up the dream of establishing a communist regime along the lines of Cuba or Venezuela in El Salvador. He said the Melgar appointment

was especially disrespectful towards the U.S., given his involvement in the 1985 Zona Rosa killings of four off-duty Embassy Marine Security Guards. Angulo said there was a post-war understanding that former combatants should not be appointed to certain positions. He said Melgar's appointment "was like appointing someone involved in the Jesuit murders to be Minister of Defense." Both Almendariz and Angulo asserted that Melgar was responsible for both the planning and execution of the 1985 murders. Almendariz pledged to provide PolCouns with copies of trial proceedings for Pedro Antonio Andrade (aka Marco Gonzalez), where Andrade was reportedly acquitted of the Zona Rosa killings and effectively proved Melgar's involvement.

15. (C) Comment: Zablah and Almendariz confirmed earlier reports of the FMLN's efforts to weaken the coalition that controls the Legislative Assembly. That the FMLN would be looking to strengthen its hand in the Assembly is not surprising, as that branch of government remains an important obstacle to FMLN hard-liners pursuing some of their long-held and more radical ideas. We remain skeptical that the FMLN will find much traction among ARENA Deputies, however disgruntled they are with former and present party leadership. However, if the FMLN were to succeed in fracturing its opposition in the current Assembly, the consequences could be ominous.
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